

WALT DISNEY
PICTURES PRESENTS

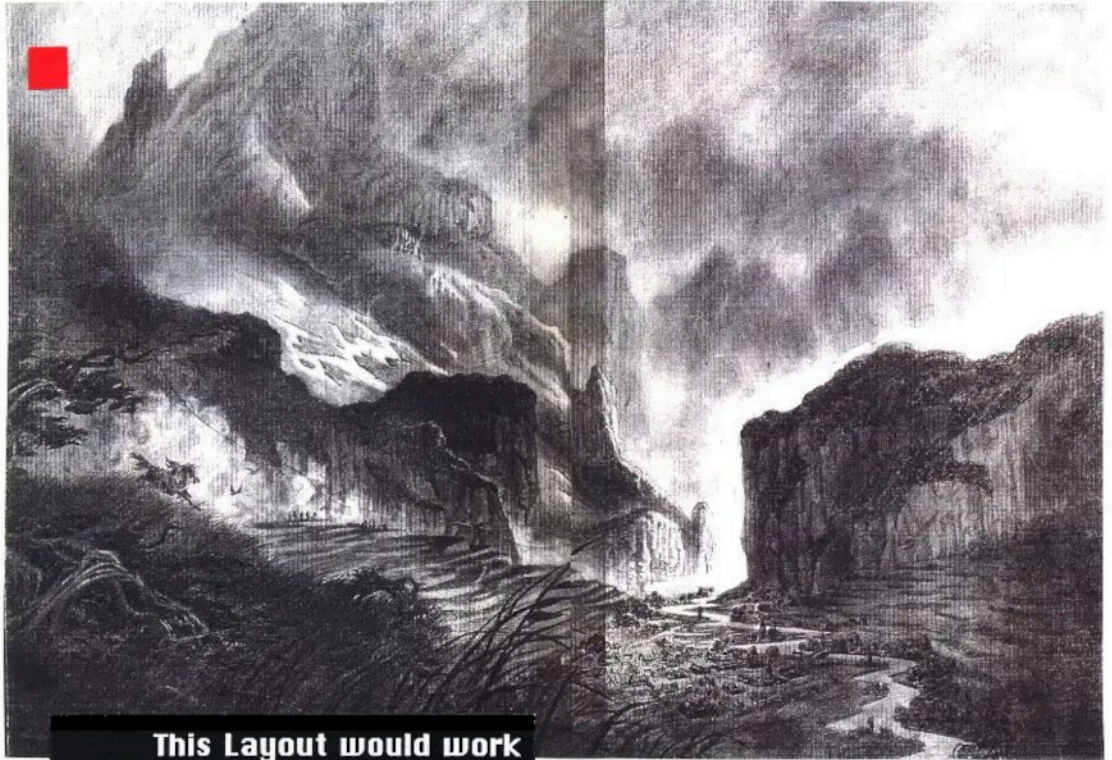


STYLE guide

Hans P Bacher

1995

Correction of Layout-Studies



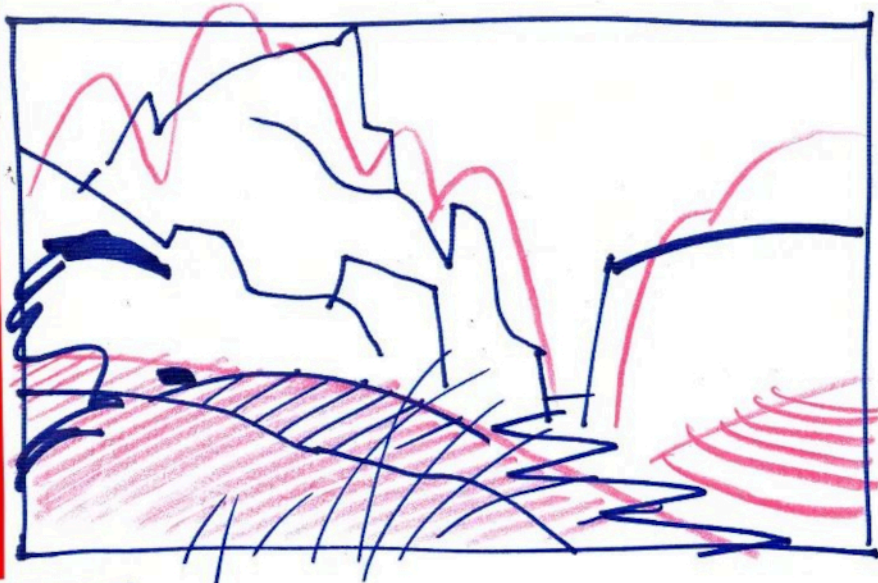
This Layout would work for a 'Bierstadt'-Style Picture. It doesn't look Chinese at all.

The foreground has as much detail as the background, there is no focus-level, the character - Mulan on her horse - gets lost.

Always remember the main rule of the Chinese Style - BALANCE - balanced positive and negative space, balance between empty and busy space.

Create a stage for the animation, the elements of your composition should lead the eye to the character.

Avoid repeating similar patterns and shapes like the river, rocks, grass and trees - create an interesting variety, use symbols, don't copy reality.



You get the best feeling for composition and contrast-values in small thumbnail- sketches. Try to use a limited amount of Grey's or Blue's - not more than 4. All these different ideas for the same scene should be used for discussion and correction like what we do with color-keys for Backgrounds.

Check in the ARL-Archives the thumbnails done for BAMBI.

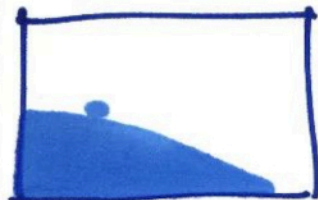




Correction

Separate the background into several detail-levels, starting with nearly no detail in the mountain-level, like they were in the mist, the closer you move to the fore-ground and to where your focus-level is, the more detail you use. Always make sure the character is readable. Light in front of Dark, Dark in front of Light.

In case all the information you have to show in one Background is overloading your drawing with too much detail - discuss it with your Head of the Deptmt., the Art-Director and the Directors. It is better to create an additional scene or reduce the amount of Information than to destroy the look of the film.

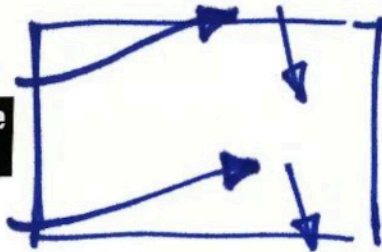


Some detail at the Top-end of the mountains, disappearing into the mist.



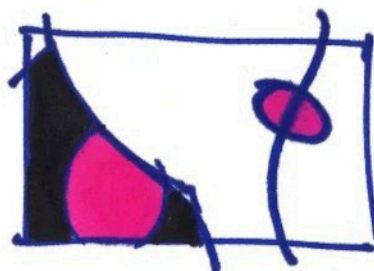
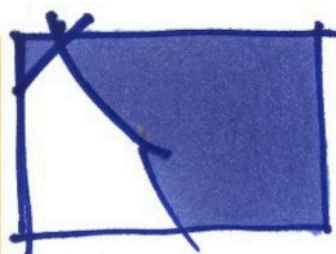
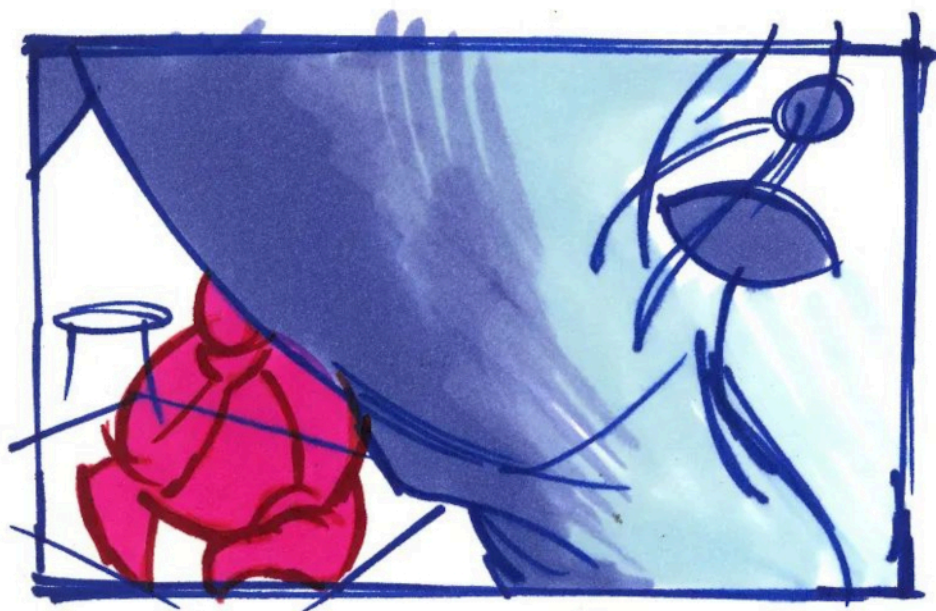
Empty 'stage' for character

Foreground darker with more detail



Note composition

Avoid whenever it is possible confusing detail around the character-/animation area



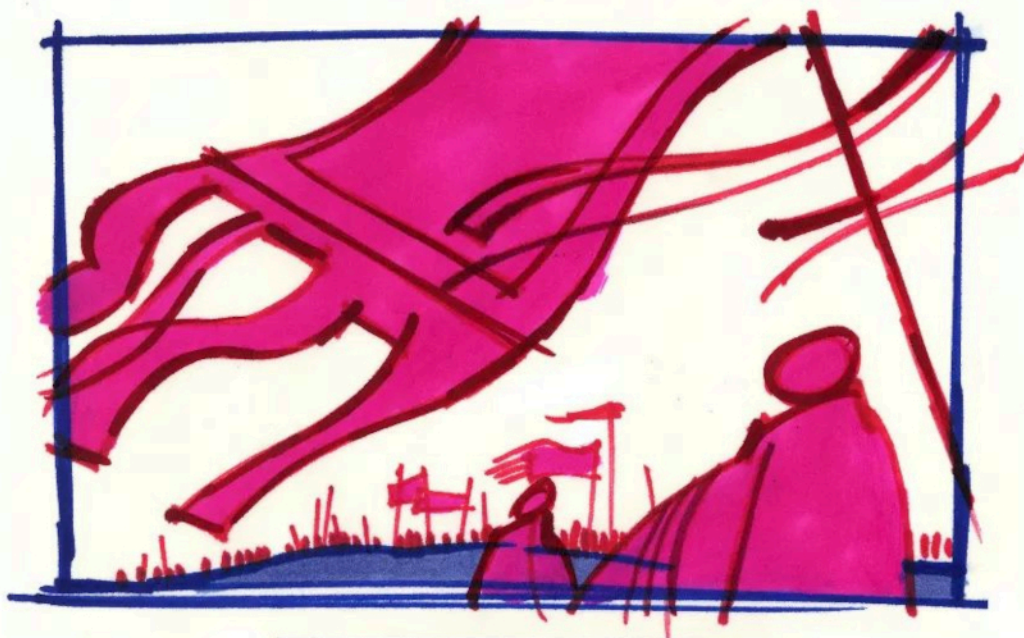
Note the balance between positive and negative space

In this case the foreground element and the character would be animated, with the focus and detail level on the curtain and the character.

It wouldn't make sense to add detail in the background or to animate the clouds, the action is important...

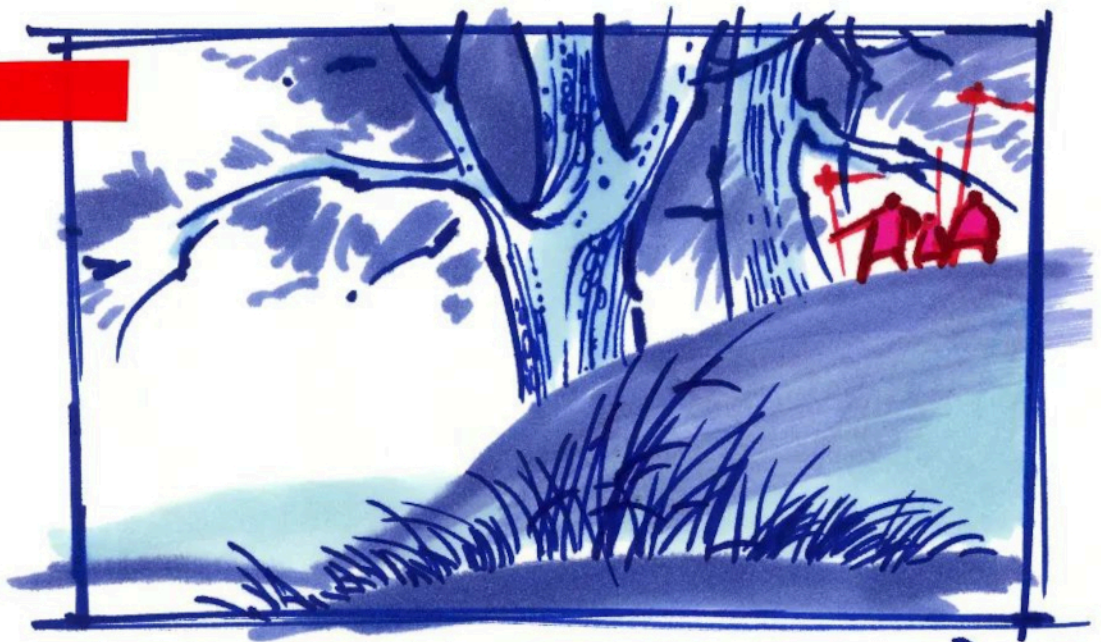


...but in a more atmospheric scene like this where you need to create mood the clouds should be part of the animation and composition.



Note the empty stage without the characters. The animation creates the final composition and has to be designed very careful, especially when CGI is involved creating crowds or animated objects like the flaggs, and everything has to be planned way ahead.

Use shapes and detail-elements of the Background to lead the eye to the 'stage' especially when action is not located in center of your composition.





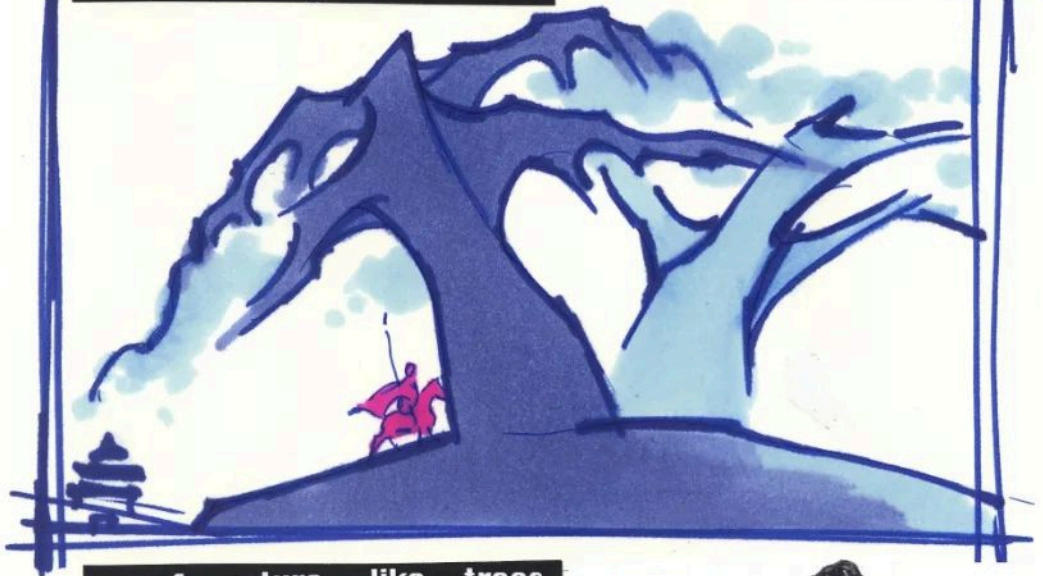
Choose interesting compositions like Down- or Upshots.

A Downshot with a well animated shadow and very little detail on the ground, but with a framing detailed out-focus foreground can be very effective.

The same for Upshots...



Another important part
of the style is the use of
typical Chinese Painting
elements

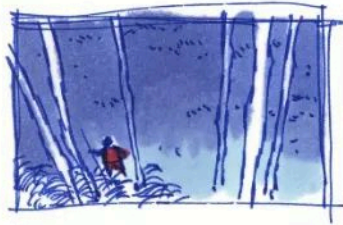


- of nature, like trees, bamboo, mountains, cloud-shapes...
- of architecture

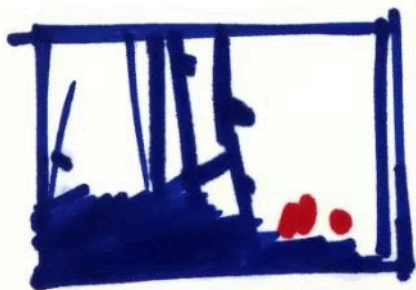


千年老松生淡色雪
魄承元氣顏似三生石
秋山竹坡馬侍講畫於石屏





Staging Ideas



**Note the balanced
composition -**

Rethinking of MULAN's BG-/Layout-Style

Nov.13, 1995

In general there were problems from the very beginning combining necessary story-information and details with the demands of the style.

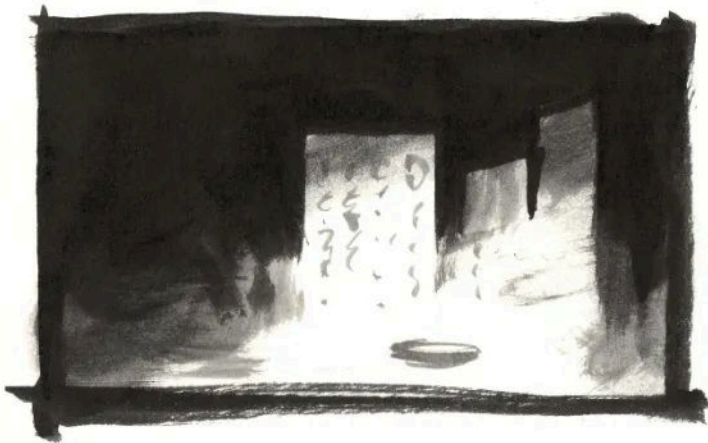
My stylistic approach was and still is besides using typical chinese elements - >Less is more<. That means to show detail when necessary and then in limited amounts and in harmony with the staging of the characters.

Unfortunately - similar to the character-style - we lost more and more of that idea.

The second important issue now is about combining the new more stylized characters with our backgrounds. These characters don't work on top of overdetailed backgrounds.

The conclusion is - we have to redesign certain areas like

- Mulan's house - (exterior + interior)
- Temple (exterior + interior)
- Stable - especially in Sequ.3.9
- Garden



Here is an example -

This is the interior of the temple as it should look like...



...and this is what we are doing. In the Original Layout it looks even more detailed and confusing with all the lettering and stonecarved faces.

In my stylized version I treated the stone tablets like the simplified landscape designs.

We avoid to show in detail what is not necessary and would confuse the composition - we shouldn't forget the rule - create an empty stage for the action. If we need to show detail we change our lighting, focus or camera-lens.

And avoid excessive use of perspective - there is no perspective in Chinese Art. Create depth by defining the focus levels.

> for Layout

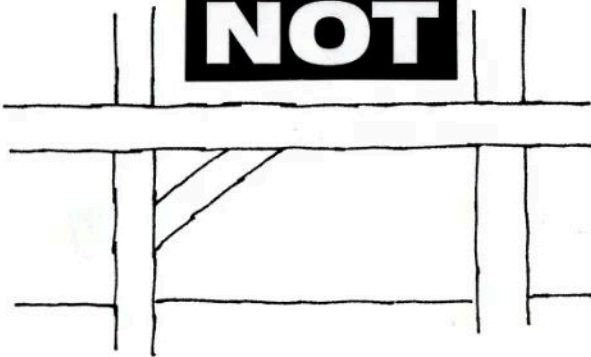
- Design the flow of Character action first and arrange the necessary background information around that area.
- Simplify the establishing shots and add detail when you cut in closer.

- Simplification means just enough to feel the scale and the distance.

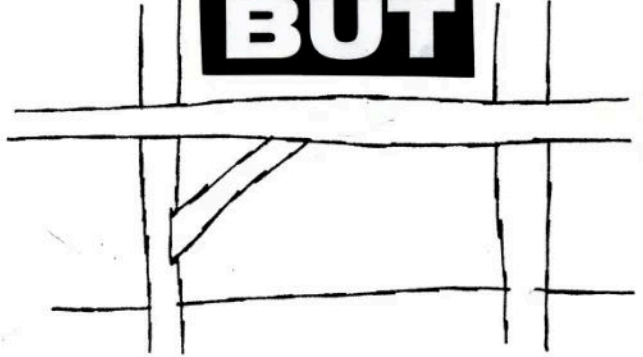
Caricature

Avoid parallel and straight lines -

NOT



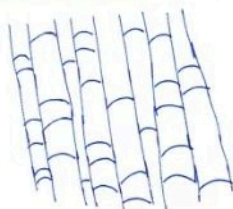
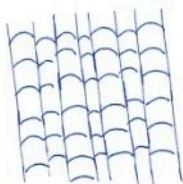
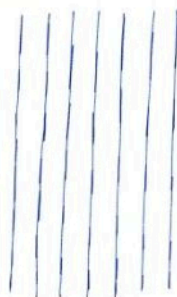
BUT



Painted in the final backgrounds this stylistic element seems to disappear, but the shape-outlines are more pleasing to the eye.

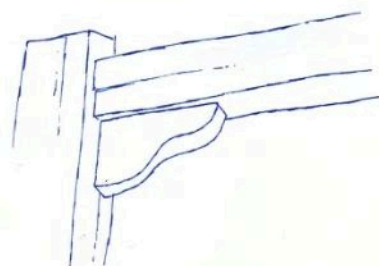
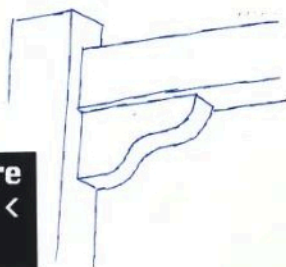
**Some more examples
of controlled > Wrong <
drawings -**

**... avoid parallel lines,
use different spacing, no
straight lines. And try to
avoid repeti-tive shapes ...**

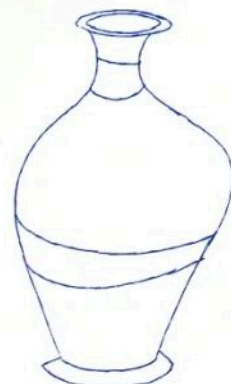
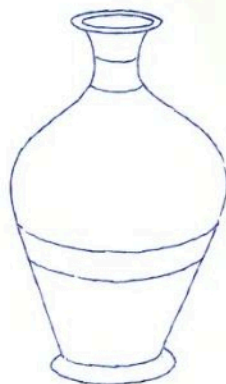


**... no repetition - make
shapes interesting ...**

**... here you can compare
how boring the > Right <
drawn version looks ...**

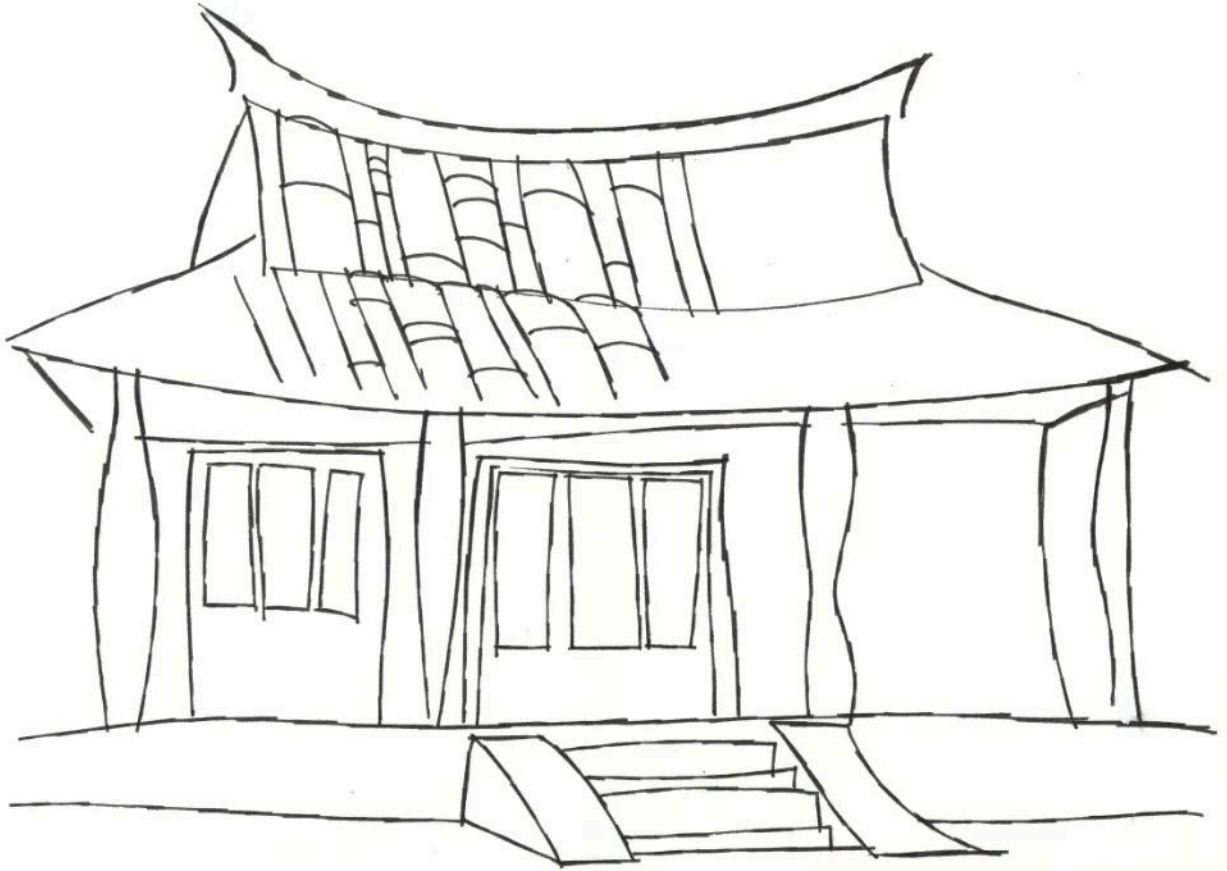


**... use shapes they are a
little bit off - away from rea-
lism ...**





**... but - be careful
with the exaggeration -**



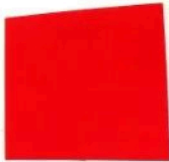
- that is too much !

Architecture and Detail

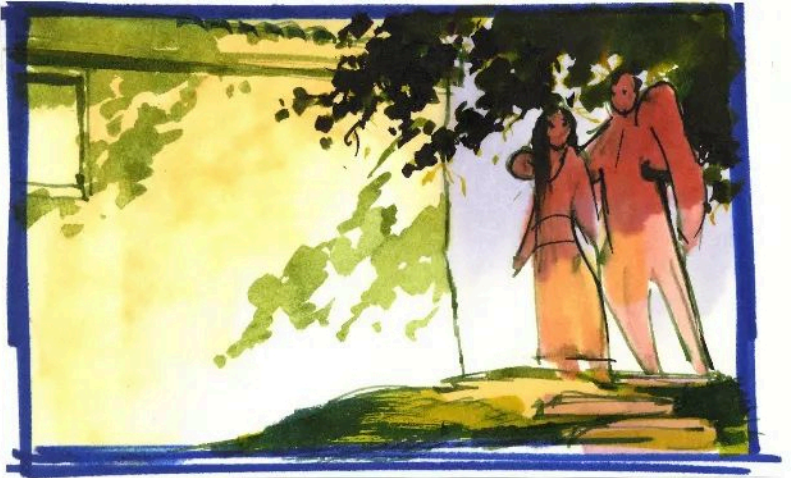
In this example I want to demonstrate how the Information Design can be translated into our Layout Style.



Compare the 2 drawings - it is interesting that the stylistically changed version looks more appealing with not one single parallel line, where everything has been drawn controlled > Wrong <.



Rules



A rule of the style is to use detail only where the point of interest is.

In case of an establishing shot where we can't avoid to show more information than usual, especially in connection with architecture, we should use the pos./neg. balance rules as well as the right use of light, shadow and perspective - and counterbalance too many straight lines with curves in trees, hanging lanterns and other additional objects.

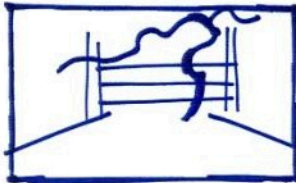
In the final color-version keeping the complicated areas monochrome, avoiding too many different colors, we reduce the effect of too much detail.



Rules



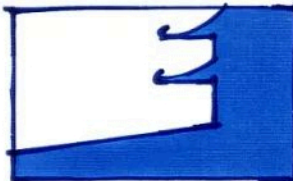
Balance between
busy and quiet ...



Balance between
straight and curved ...



Balance between
positive and negative
space ...



Clear silhouette
readability ...

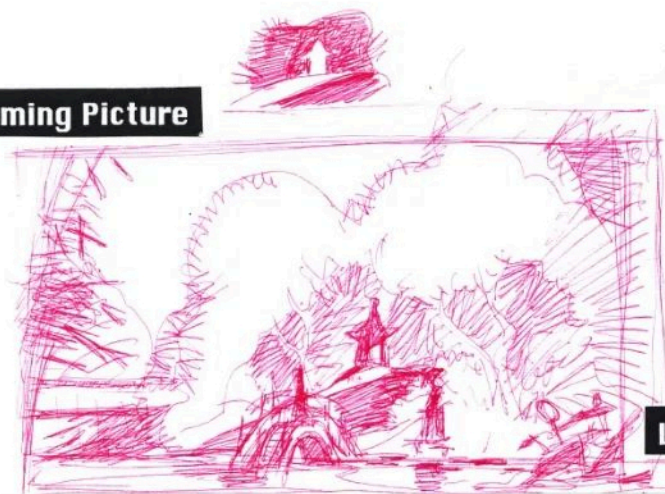


Empty stage for
the action ...



Avoid overloading
the picture with too
much information ...

Bamboo framing Picture



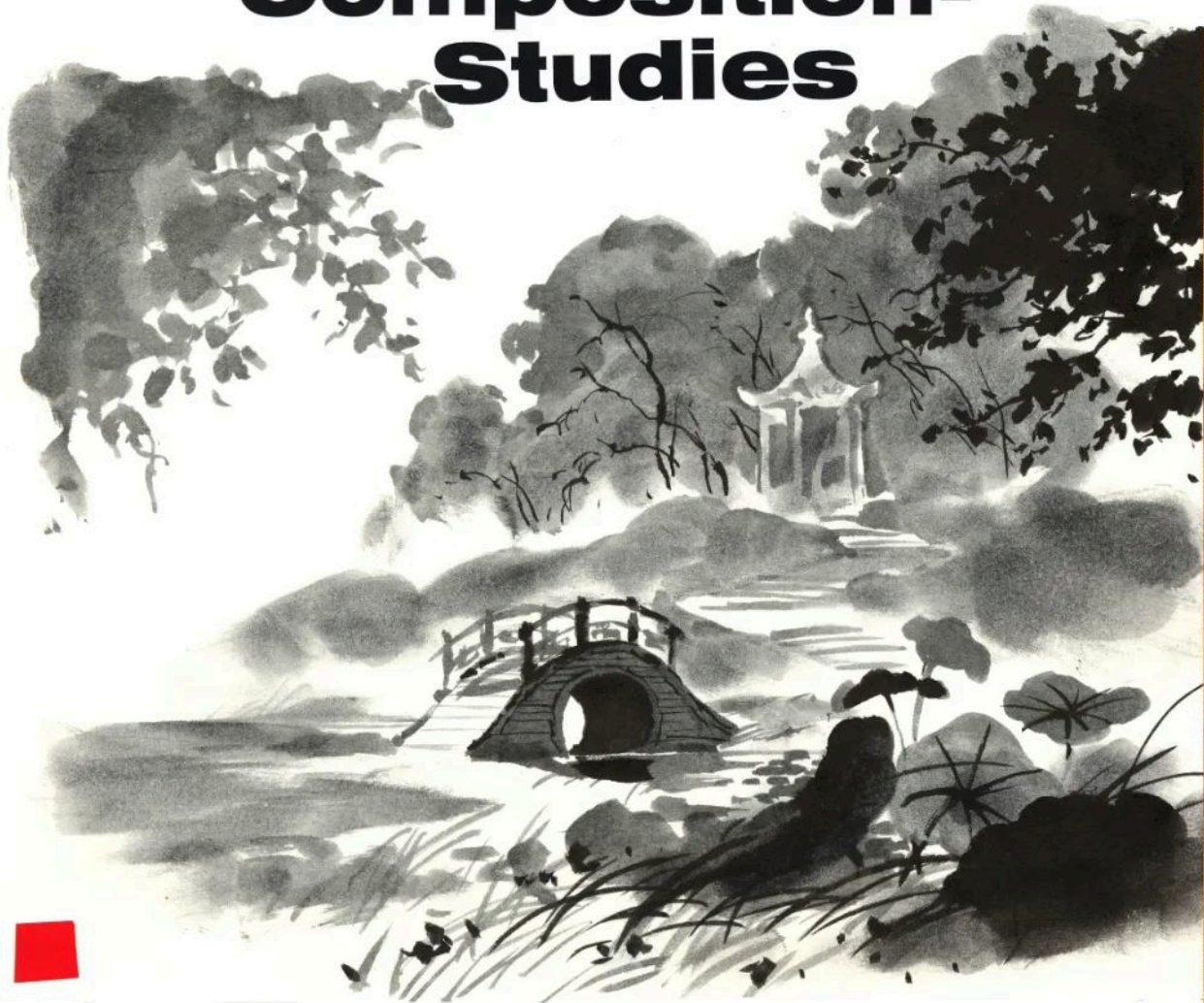
LIGHT, low sun

Lotus, see detailed designs...

Shadows of foliage on wall

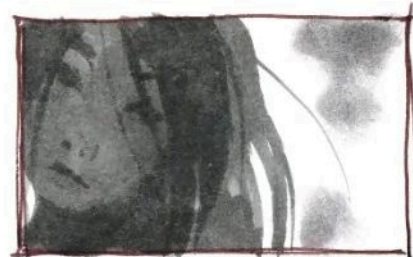
Lilies indicating Perspective

Composition- Studies

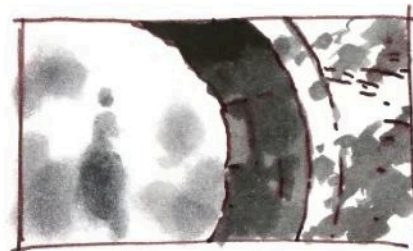




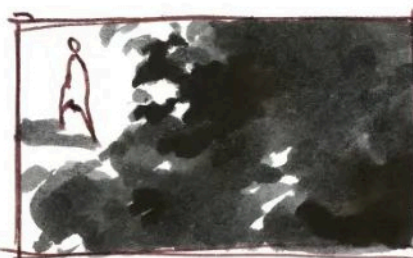
Ideas for the song...



**soft look for close ups
- similar to Backlit-effect -**



**foreground on focus,
background include Animation
out of focus -**

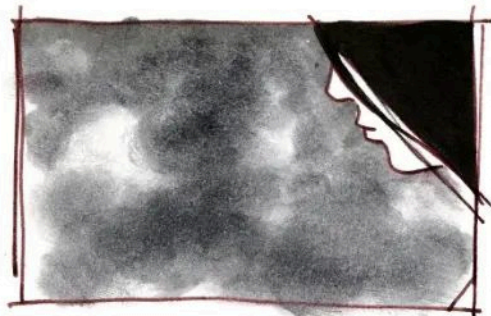


**CGI-animated foliage
in foreground - downshot -**



**Mulan is walking in
and out of the tree-shadows
on the way up to the temple,
BG out of focus -**

**unusual placement of
the character together with
moving out of focus shadow-
elements -**



**silhouetted back-
ground-elements, slightly
moving -**



just moving shadows

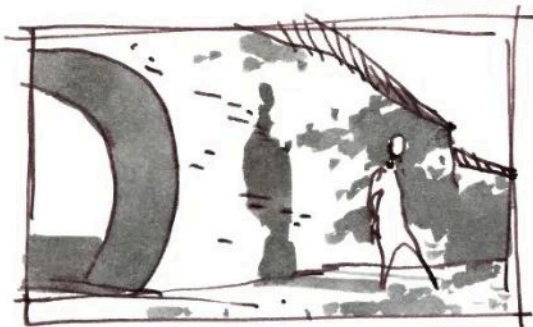


**Character soft - on focus
backlit effect through foliage**



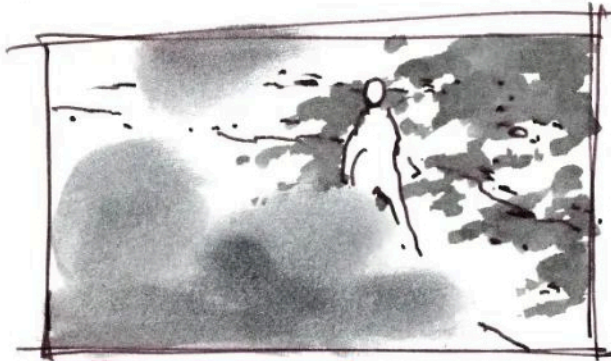
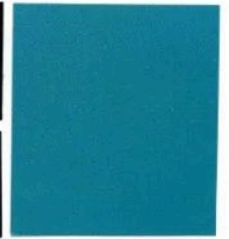
extreme close-ups.





**Character and foliage
shadow on the wall and
ground -**

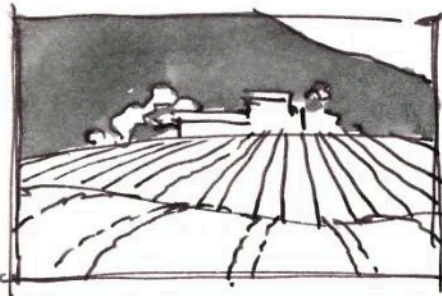
**the character reads
light in front of the darker
shadow-area -**



**use of extreme Tele-
lenses, the foreground will be
completely out of focus -**

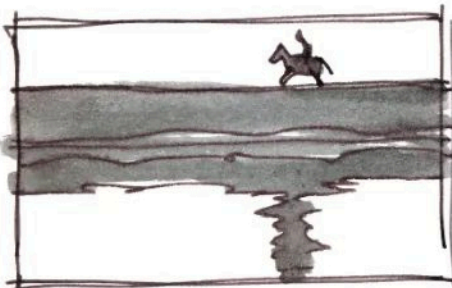


**lead the eye using
elements of the background
in perspective but try to hide
a too obvious perspective -**

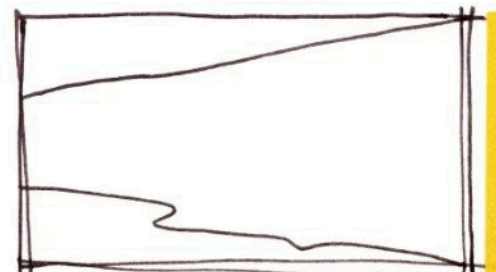


**In scenes closer on
the character keep the
background and composition
simple -**

**nothing should get
more attention than the
character !**

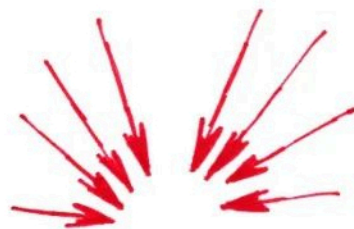


**horizontal lines are
good for peaceful moments -**



**avoid to connect the
corners of the frame.**



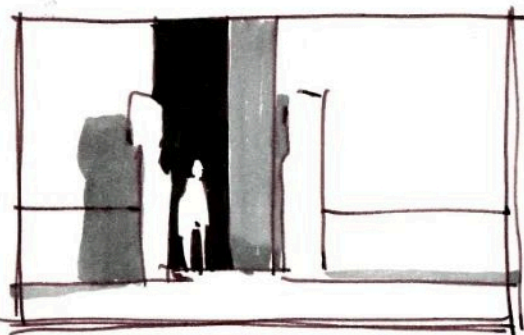


Try to create emotion in your compositions. Like fear-someone is trapped...



...or the opposite - open skies and the feeling that it creates...

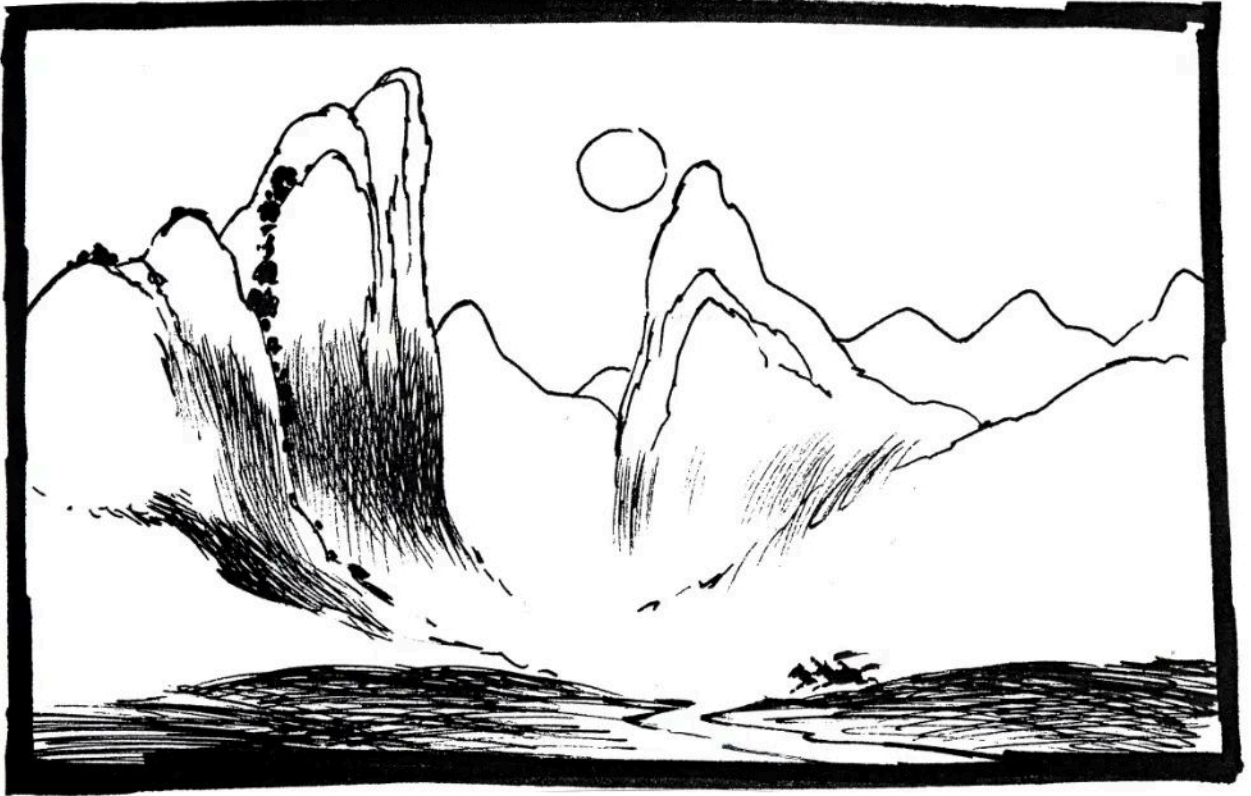
Composition-Studies



...there are always the same rules - light in front of dark and opposite, or warm in front of cold and opposite, or curved in front of straight and opposite, or simple in front of very detailed and opposite and so on - always using the contraries.

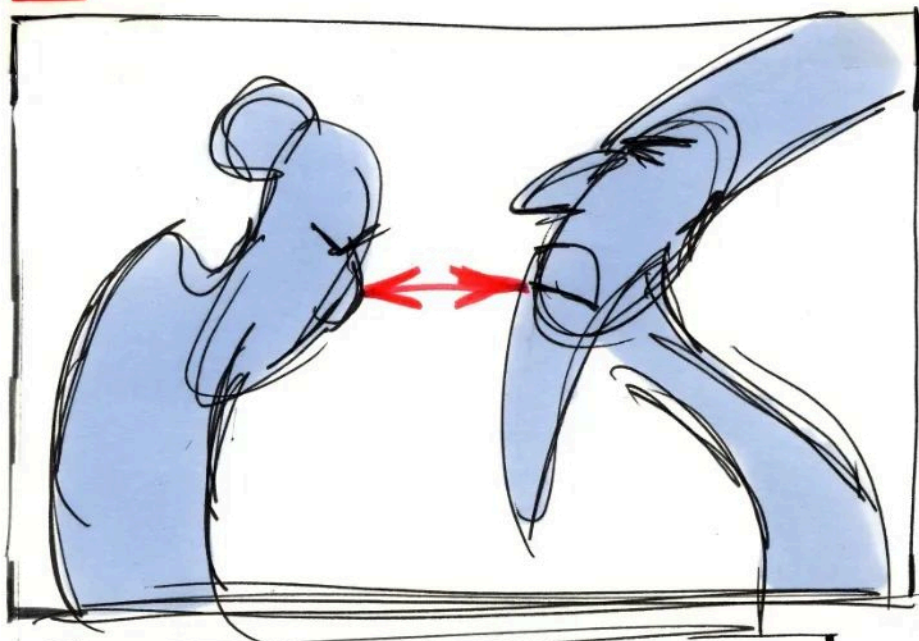
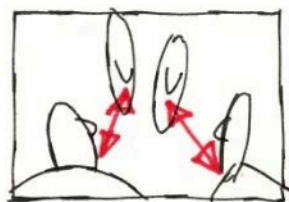
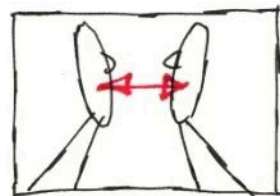
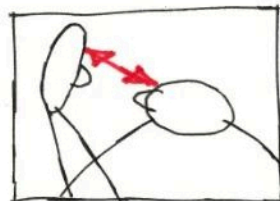
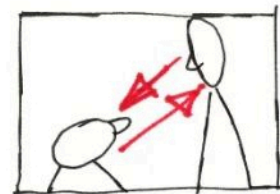


Layout and Staging



Create a Stage for the animation - the best way is to plan the key-poses first with a very rough Layout, then build the background around them. Working that way you keep the character-acting-area free from distracting details.

In your first very rough Layout sketch and in thumbnails you have to plan the basic elements, the perspective, camera-angles and the contrast.

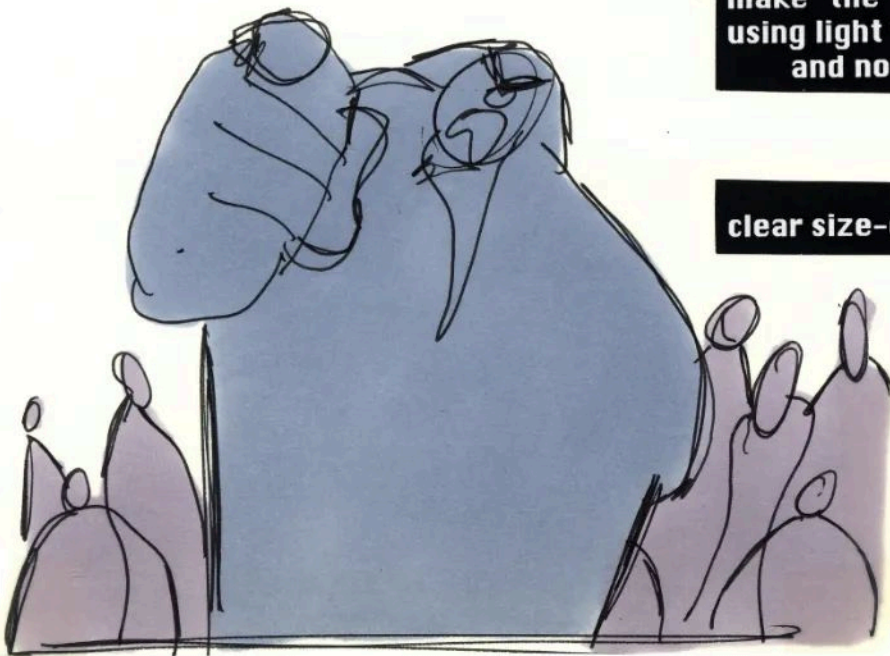


Staging ideas
clear readability !

Staging ideas



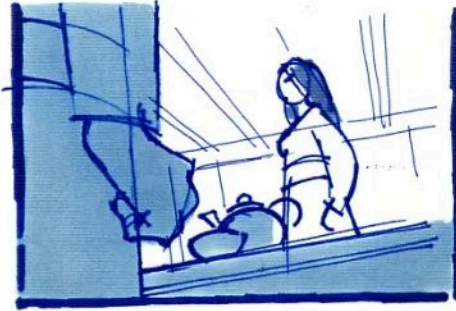
Intimidating guardians -
make the look dramatic by
using light from below -
and no fancy perspective



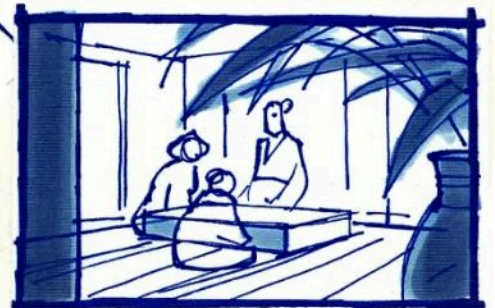
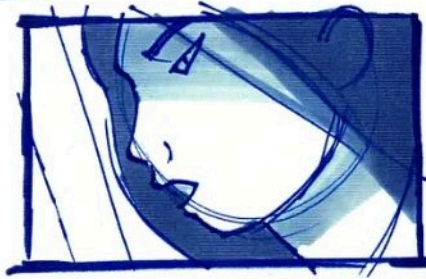
clear size-difference



COMPOSITION



Extreme upshots -



for endshot - better framing,
should show empty area
where Mulan was sitting.

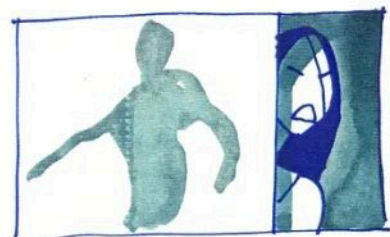


In general more dramatic camera-angles -

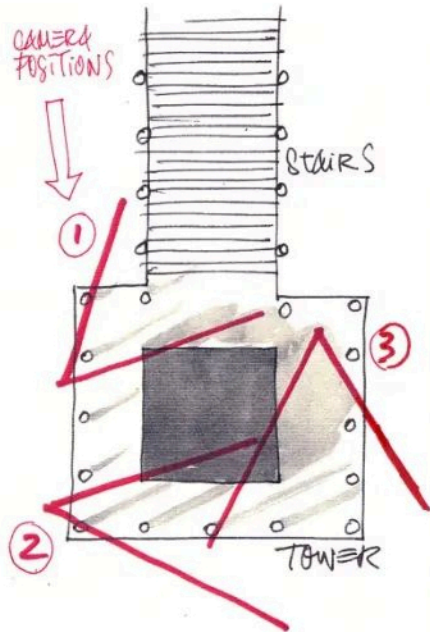
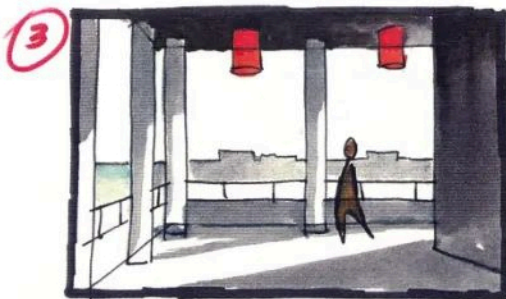
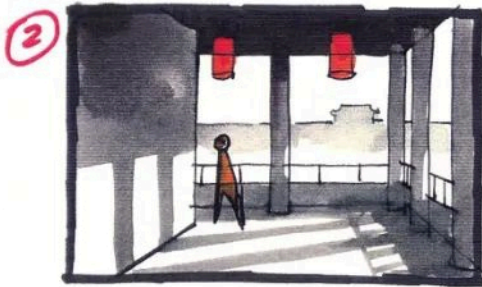


Mulan in father's shadow -

father's shadow on wall in front of Mulan -



the showdown on top of the tower



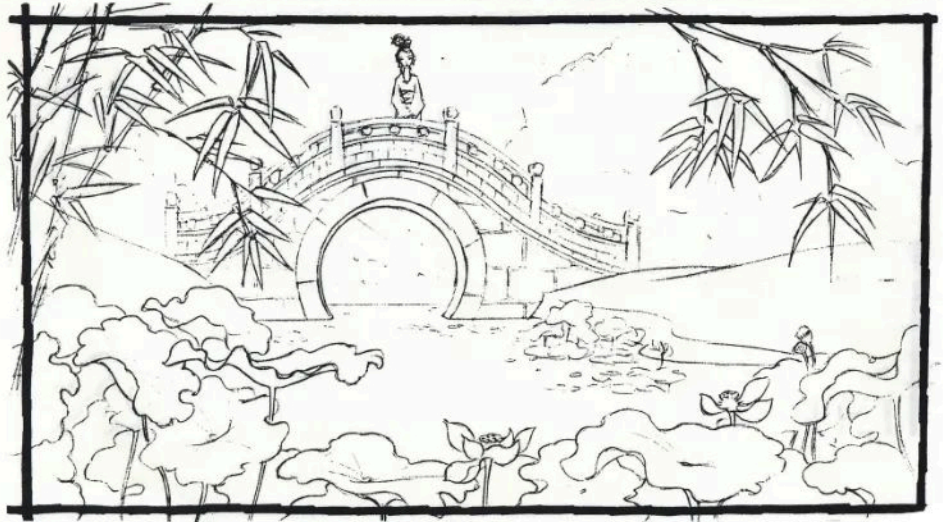
define clearly the location
with elements of the
architecture and the
shadows...



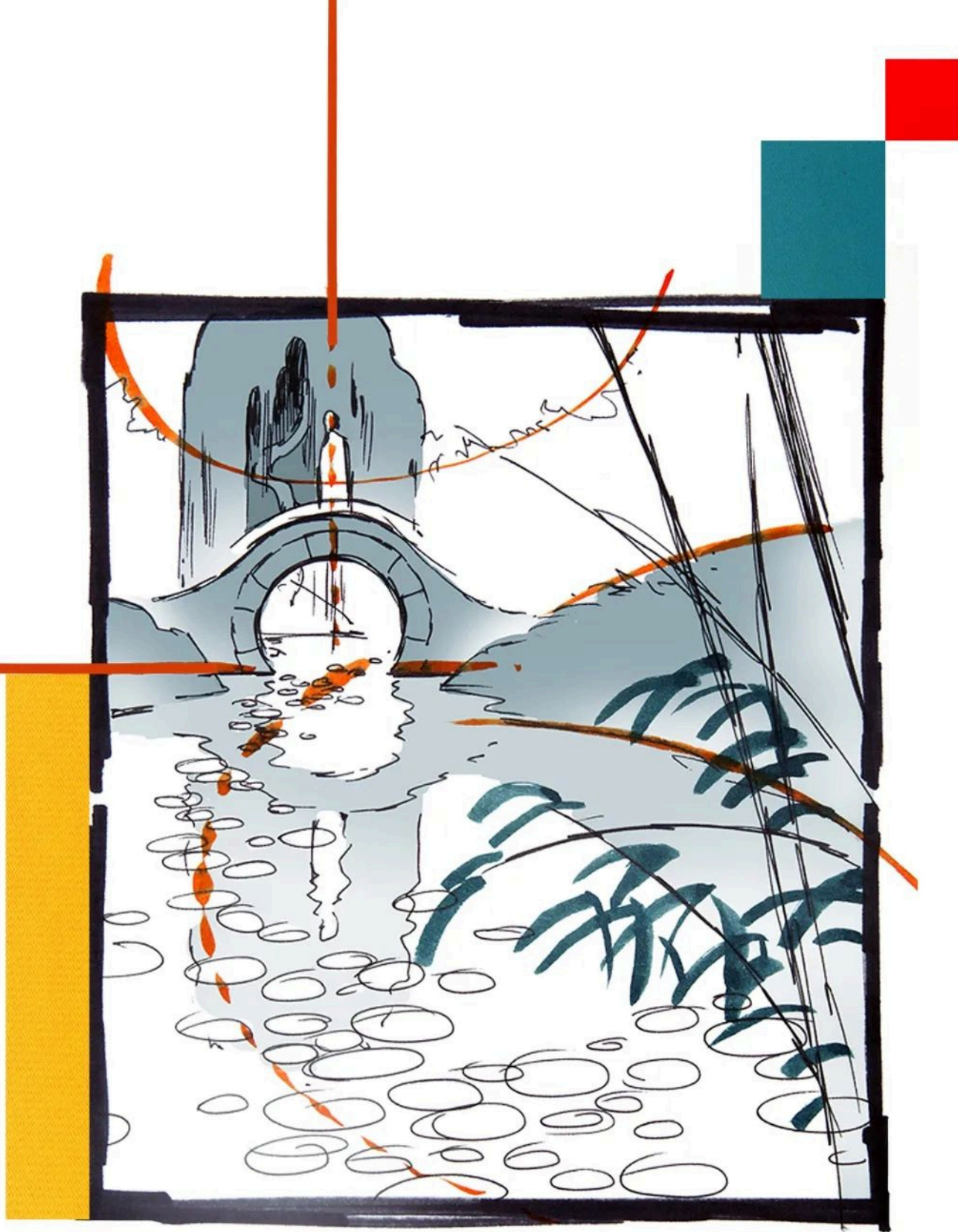
Very first thumbnails...



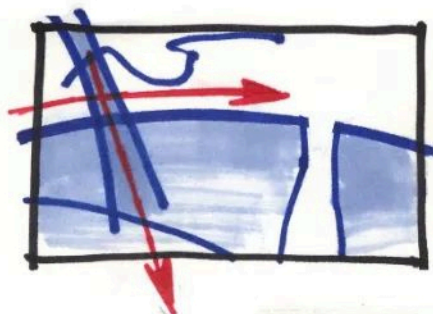
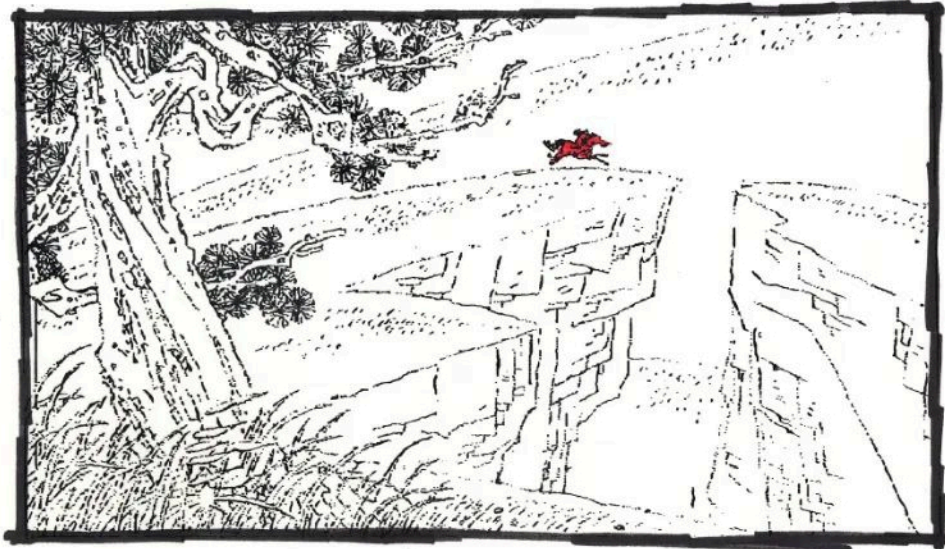
Correction of Layout-Studies



Composition is not clear enough. Don't copy reality - go for the interpretation and don't forget our Style rules.



Layout-Correction



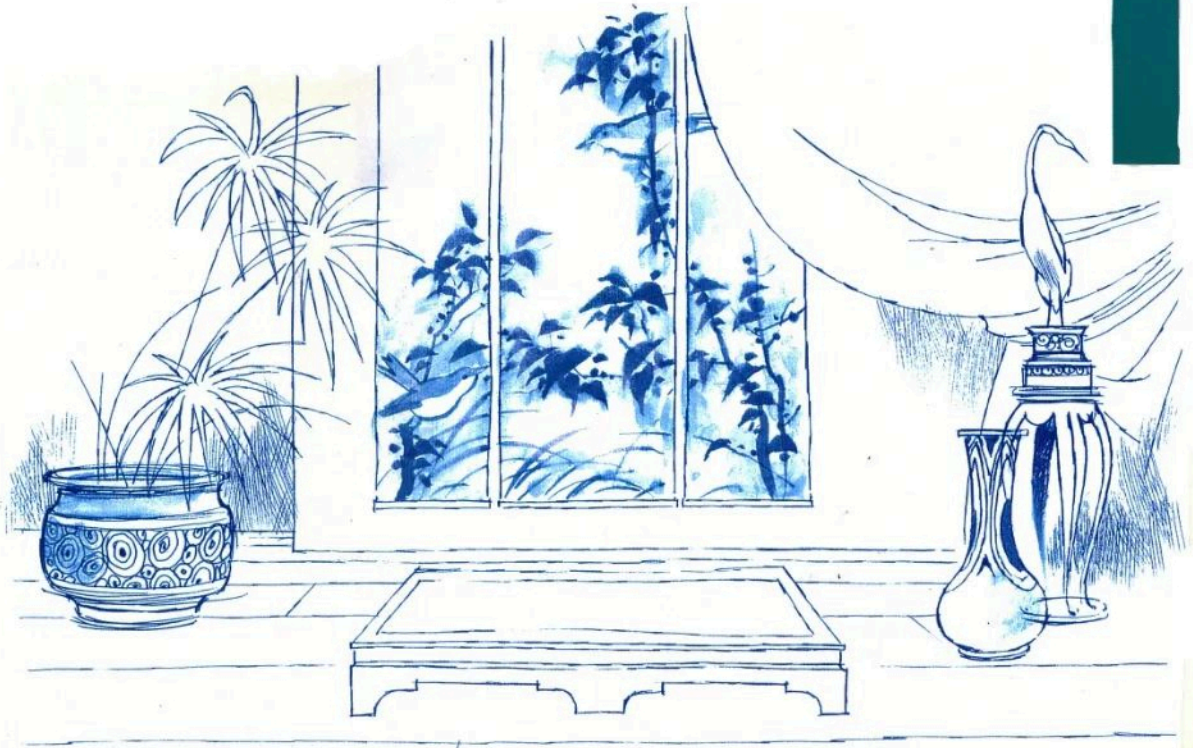
confusing angles...



...here the screen direction is clear, even the tree branch points towards the right -



more Layout Correction



Corrections for Sequ.9



The arrows are important - so concentrate on the foreground. Don't make that tree too detailed, the roots were creating the wrong interest. Be careful with the amount of detail in the bark.



Build your Layout-Composition around the character and the action, try to repeat the flow of movement or counterbalance it. Remember the stage-effect.

Test the best composition in small thumbnails and don't forget the value-sketches. Try different variations, add them to your Layout-sketch, they will be helpful for the color-key artist.



Sequ.9

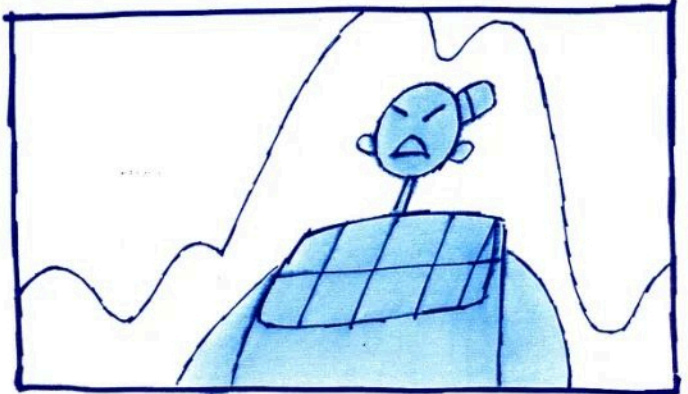
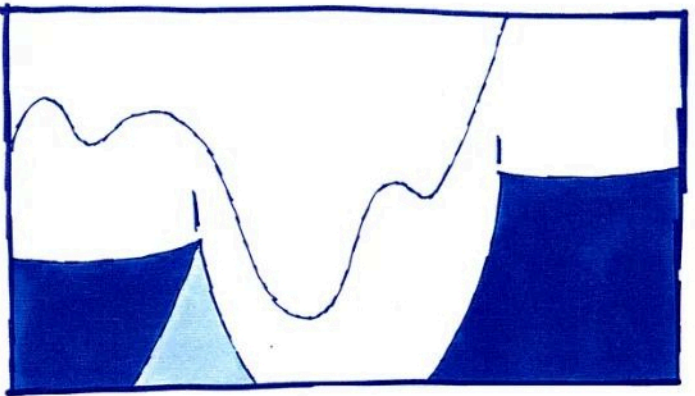
Keep the forest background simple, don't make it look like the deep Black-Forest, it should look light and fresh -

and make the characters read in front of it ...

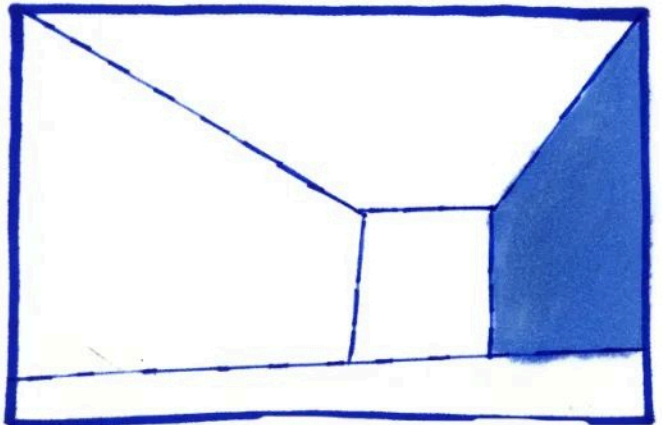


Mistakes

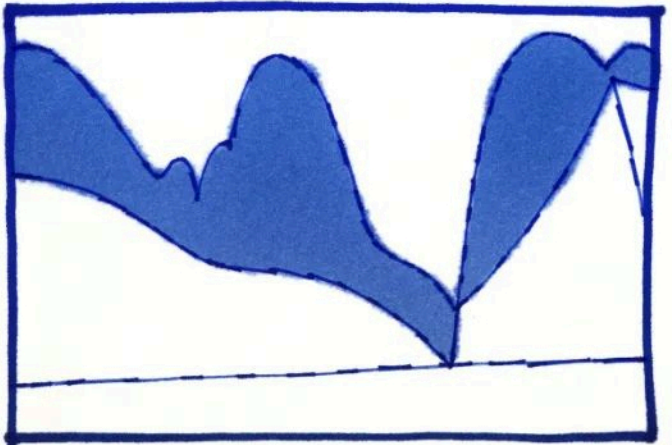
Don't repeat the shapes of Characters or Background-elements in your Composition. Avoid to fill gaps between shapes with similar shapes.



Avoid the corners of the field - lines lead the eye to nowhere.



Don't create tangents and crossings - you will create interest in a non wanted area.

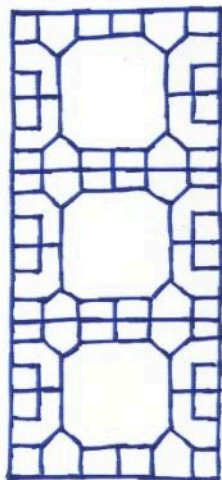
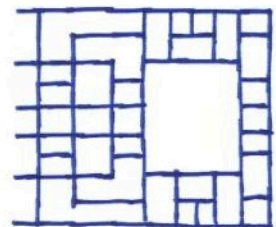
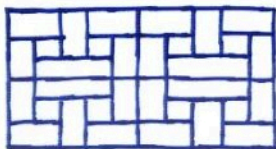




Make-up Sequ.
 room dark, contrast - white
 face,
 very moody interior with
 strong light and dark contrast,
 windows like backlit effect.



Details



COMPOSITION



Matchmaker Interior



Most of the Interior-Action is happening in close-up shots - use only some atmospheric detail in the background, don't overload it. We don't have to establish the Interior - we won't come back.

Show a wealthy environment, a bit like a boudoir - lots of curtains, vases and some other tasteless stuff.

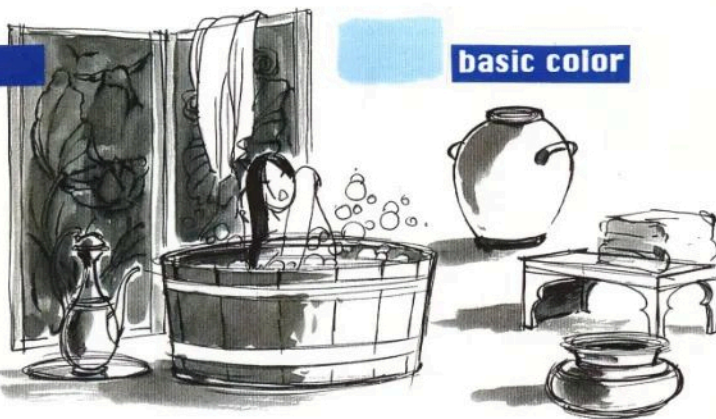
Sequ. 1.9

Dressmaker



basic color

Bath



basic color

basic color



BASIC
COLOR



Hairdresser

Interior Designs

Lake Sequence



**Concentrate with detail
on the foreground - see rock,
lillies, lotus, grass and leaves**



**The Background is lit by
a full moon -
keep the distant background
undefined, don't even show
the border of the lake -**





**Some ideas for the
Lake-Sequence ...**



**Color and mood very
similar to the Blue Bayou
Sequence in > Make Mine
Music < -**

**more Ultramarine than
Green-Blue.**

**Study the landscape-
Paintings of Jean-Baptiste
Camille Corot and mix his
soft painting style with the
Chinese elements.**



Grass

Don't use shapes in a repetitive way - even with grass you can create a dynamic composition...



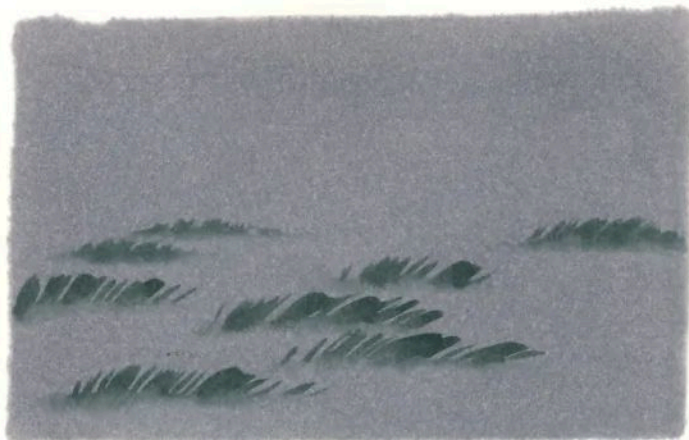
Grass & Weed



Organize the Grass - divide the big confusing grassmasses into several smaller shapes. Try to make each single shape interesting in silhouette, then get the outline-look and add - if needed - some interior detail to achieve a more 3-dimensional look.



8.93



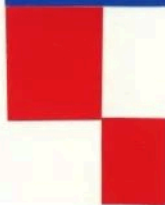
Grass

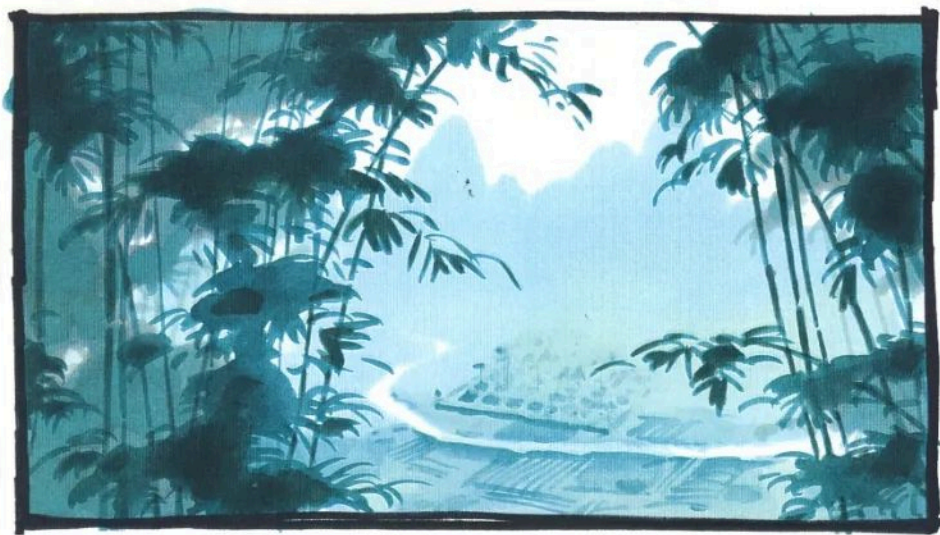


Foliage



Sequ. 7





Bamboo



Pine Trees

THE EASIEST WAY TO CREATE THESE SHAPES IS — TO PAINT THEM ON A DIFFERENT SHEET WITH A THICK FELT-PEN AND THEN TRACE THESE OUTLINES INTO YOUR LAYOUT.



IT IS IMPOSSIBLE
TO CREATE THIS
SHAPE IN A LINE-
DRAWING — IT
ALWAYS LOOKS
WRONG!



7.10.96

Jan 5

pine needles
IN LAYOUT

— legend of Mulan —

IN WIDER SHOTS AND IN THE DISTANCE YOU PAINT JUST THE BASIC SHAPE (HERE DARK GREEN) — IN CLOSE-UP SHOTS ADD MORE DETAIL ON TOP. DON'T BECOME TOO REALISTIC. IT'S ENOUGH TO MODEL SOME 'PINE-NEEDLE-ISLANDS'. DON'T MAKE



THEM
TOO
SYMMETRIC!

